REMARKS

Applicants have amended the claims in order to reduce the initial filing fee by deleting the multiple dependent claims from the application. Applicants retain the right to reintroduce any subject matter canceled by the present Amendment at any time during the prosecution of this application or any further application claiming benefit of this application.

Applicants have amended the application to substitute the originally filed pages 22-27 with the amended pages 22-26 attached to the International Preliminary Examiner Report (Annexes) and included in the application as filed herewith. Also, an Abstract of the Disclosure has been added to the application.

Applicants are submitting herewith a copy of the Search Report which issued on International Application No. PCT/GB99/03283, of which the present application is the U.S. national phase. All of the publications cited in the International Search Report are listed on the attached Form PTO-1449. It is Applicants' understanding that, under the procedures of the PCT, copies of the cited publications will have been supplied to the U.S. Patent Office by the International Bureau. However, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney if additional copies are necessary or would facilitate examination of the present application.

Otherwise, the Examiner is respectfully requested to return an initialed and dated copy of the attached Form PTO-1449 to confirm that all publications listed thereon have been considered and made officially of record in the file of this application.

Applicants understand that, under the procedures of the PCT, a copy of the priority document (GB 9821663.3, filed 5 October 1998) will have been supplied to the U.S. Patent Office pursuant to Rule 17 of the PCT Regulations. It is therefore

respectfully requested that the first Official Action in the present application contain an indication that the appropriate priority document is in the file of this application.

In view of the above amendments, an early action on the application is now in order and is most respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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IN THE CLAIMS:

4. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein foaming of the ceramic clip is achieved using a ball mill in conjunction with gassing and/or a blowing agent.

5. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the ceramic slip has a viscosity in the range of from 30 to 100 mPas.

6. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the ceramic particulate is biocompatible.

7. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the ceramic particulate comprises one or more of hydroxyapatite, a substituted-hydroxyapatite, a glass, an AW-glass ceramic and/or alumina.

8. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the ceramic particulate has a d_{50} of from 1 to 300 µm, preferably from 1 to 15 µm.

9. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the ceramic particulate has a surface area in the range of from 5 to 200 m^2g^{-1}.

10. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the organic binder comprises one or more of poly (vinyl alcohol), poly (vinyl

pyrrolidone), alginate, poly (lactic acid), poly (vinyl butyral), poly (ethylene glycol) and/or poly (vinyl acetate).

11. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the liquid carrier comprises water, propan-2-ol or trichloroethane.

12. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the organic binder is present in the liquid carrier in an amount of from 0.2 to 10 w/v%.

14. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the ceramic slip comprises from 10 to 95 w/v% ceramic particulate.

16. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the ceramic slip further comprises one or both of a dispersant and/or a defloculant.

17. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein prior to burn-out of the organic binder the liquid carrier is allowed to evaporate [form] from the foamed carrier slip.

19. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 17 [or claim 18], wherein the concentration of the organic binder in the liquid carrier is selected such that the percentage of binder remaining after substantially all of the liquid carrier has bene evaporated is from 0.5 to 10 w/w%.

21. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the foamed ceramic slip is cast in a mould having a surface coated with a release agent.

22. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein burn-out of the organic binder is carried out at a temperature in the range of from 150 to 700°C.

23. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, further comprising sintering the ceramic foam following burn-out of the organic binder.

25. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 23 [or claim 24], wherein the sintered ceramic foam has a bulk porosity in the range of from 40 to 95%, preferably from 70 to 90%.

26. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the sintered ceramic foam has a strut density in the range of from 60 to 95%, preferably from 70 to 90% of the theoretical density of the ceramic.

27. (Amended) A method as claimed in [any one of the claims 23 to 26] claim 23, wherein the sintered ceramic foam has a modal pore size in the range of from 100 to 2000 μm, preferably from 100 to 1000 μm.

28. (Amended) A macroporous ceramic foam obtainable by a method according to [any one of the preceding claims] claim 1.

30. (Amended) A composition which comprises a macroporous ceramic foam, [as claimed in claim 28] or a synthetic bone material as claimed in claim 29 together with a pharmaceutically acceptable diluent or carrier.

31. (Amended) A bone implant, filler, cement, tissue engineering scaffold, synthetic bone graft or drug-delivery device which comprises a macroporous ceramic

foam [as claimed in claim 28], a synthetic bone material [as claimed in claim 29] or a composition as claimed in claim 30.